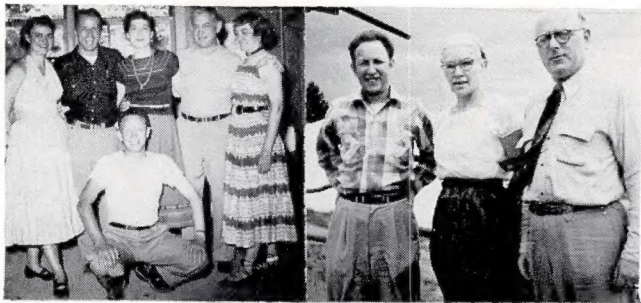


Before 1949 most of the Ethnic groups where first or second generation Americans mostly stemming of actual peasant stock, whose parents or themselves, came to the States directly from the farms. They were ordinary people with a love for their land and its traditions and these they tried to preserve simply and unadulteratedly. There were some choreographers among them, too, but not prevalently so. Now, the picture changed. Most of the DP (Displaced Persons) are city folk and professionals. Who never danced peasant dances in Eurpoe, but only tangos, rhumbas, two steps and jitterbug. It was a revelation to the majority of them to note how great the interest in folk dance is in this (of all countries!) land of ours. Among the new immigrants are also some dancers from Europe, some have a reputation. Most of them studied the German style of expressionistic dance moderne either in Germany or Vienna (Austria). Local groups, those who have not any of their own leaders, obtain these dancers to lead their groups. After all, "they just came over from Europe". These are now the Ethnic leaders with no folk dance background. In one case a teacher discarded the characteristic Lithuanian bounce of the polka because, mind you: "It was too peasantish!" And it annoyed her? And where from, I wonder, did the folk dances derive (for the most part)? Certainly not from the Russian, German or Viennese ballet schools! It has always been a fact in every country that it was the peasant, thanks to whom, that any form of lore remained alive to this day. And now, the folk dance is too peasantish!

The Displaced People, while in Germany, where bread, clothes and a penny was hard to obtain, danced demonstratively with sole desire to please and gain favors. Plus the fact that their whole training and background was with demonstration as a goal, the whole trend now seems to be toward one aim: to please the audience. Slow dances have been greatly speeded up, simple dances were remodeled and elaborated. The whole idea is not to retain a national characteristic and individuality but to be showier than the next nationality. This trend exists with nearly every nationality.

Out East, the festivals are mostly demonstrational. There are very few Californian style festivals where participation is the main object. Out East the audience watches Ethnic groups demonstrating. But out East there is an abundance of Ethnic groups. There is no federation which imposes uniformity of dance execution. Versions are rampant among both groups, the ethnic and the synthetic. As a result it would be hardly possible to have a general participation a each guest will know of a different version of a performing dance. Nor are the Easterners dependent on recorded music. Ethnic groups are all exclusively live-music users with the accordion as the main instrument followed closely by the piano. The violin is in use among Scandinavian and Irish groups. Some even have small native instrumental orchestras. These are not public orchestras but play for their own group only the music and dance as interpreted by the teacher and the interpretation of the next teacher, tho of the same national background, will differ—often greatly. If, for instance, all Lithuanian groups are to have a festival and each one is to present Malūnas, there would be as many different versions of this dance as there would be participating groups. This is true of all nationalities except of such ethnic groups who do circle dances, as in the case of most Balkan nations. But even among them, theatric dance masters will schmaltz up a simple dance for stage appeal. It is because of the above situation that many folk dancers become confused. Accustomed as they are to uniformity they immediately judge their favorite version or leader, right and the other wrong. To them, somebody **must** be wrong. But such is the situation.



STAFF AND EDITORS

The group to the left are the staff members of the camp at Stokes Forest, N. J., sponsored by American Squares Magazine. L to R: Edith Thompson of San Bruno, Calif., the pep-up gal; Ricky Holden, square dance caller and ye editor of American Squares; Olga Kulbitsky, Phys. Ed. instructor at Hunter College, N. Y., and the gal who will "go down to the bottom of steps", analyser par excellence; Frank Kaltman, caller and Folkraft man of Newark, N. J.; Shirley Durham of Louisville, Ky., play parties and fun-loving. Up front is Vyts. Missing from the picture is Harold Harton of Toronto, Canada, where he is in the service of the Ontario Province, a folk song leader and an all around recreation authority.

In the picture to the right it is Vyts again with the Holcks, of Austin, Texas, taken on Look-out Mountain, Colo., at the Lighted Lantern camp. The Holcks are the editors of "Foot and Fiddle", a square dance magazine. And guess what?! When they left the camp they not only learned kolos but loved them. Another square dancer who learned to enjoy kolos was Butch Nelson of El Paso, in fact he "adopted" the Nebesko. What's this world coming to?

— O —

Holiday Greetings

From

MARIE, DOC, and MARY WILSON

Chicago

Illinois

Nearly all Jewish groups put on "operatic" productions out of their ordinary dances at the festivals. A great change in style is taking place among the Yugoslavs. When ever I asked a Yugoslav as to what happened to a certain step previously popular and now replaced with something else I got three answers: 1) the other step is old fashioned now, 2) their uncle (or father) danced that way but it is not done that way anymore, 3) the DP's do this new way (and what does the DP do? Mostly a running žikino and U šest to everything and anything). But the most unusual response I got from a Yugoslav was that "the Ethnic Yugoslavs do it that way." (The "Old Fashioned" way, that is). This person happens to be a leader of a Yugoslav group, whom I'd call "Ethnic". Now, I don't know whom he considers Ethnic. Perhaps he, too, has in mind, the old time Yugoslav.

In a recent leaflet circulated in the minutes of the Southern Federation, a suggestion was made that European dances should be learned from "Ethnic groups" and do them the way they do them, as they are the only true source. To this I can only say: "They used to woz but they ain't no mo'."

SARAH GERTRUDE KNOTT WANTS TO KNOW

SOME QUESTIONS WHICH PESTER ME!

WHAT ARE YOURS?

1. Is there not an overall general objective and goal for which most folk festival leaders are reaching regardless of the different routes we are taking?

2. Where should we draw the line between some of the popular songs and dances of today and genuine folk songs, music, and dances? If we do not draw the line where it belongs will our festival programs not be "neither fish nor fowl"?

3. What plan would be most effective in reviving and putting back to use the survivals still to be found lingering or flourishing in various sections? Are most of them destined to give way to other forms of dances and songs reflective of the newer civilization and our new world neighborliness? What is the situation in your locality?

4. How many of the newborn so-called "folk dances and songs" now sweeping certain sections are worthy of the name "folk"? How long will they last? Of course, no one really knows, but what's your opinion?

5. How can we preserve the best in folk songs, music, and dance from the past, and add to this rich store the most real forms of expression now springing up? How can we best combine them for future use?

6. What does the word "hillbilly" mean? Does it refer to the kinds of songs or music or is it the style of singing or playing? What is its place in the folklore field?

7. How may we encourage the traditional style of ballad singing? Isn't the style of presenting the ballad important—almost as important on festival programs as the choice of the song itself? There are many singers using the ballads in regular song style. They lack the charm of the true traditional singer, known to early collectors and still to be found today. Do you think so or not? The traditional style singer grows harder and harder to find. The so-called "hillbilly style" is replacing the traditional way in many instances, often when real ballads and folk songs are used by singers. What shall we do? Anything?

8. How can we reconcile the time element—the time it takes for the songs and dances made in days of slower tempo, to the faster tempo of today's modern minute scheduled programs? For all festivals, national, international—all of them—this is a real problem today. When groups come great distances at their own expense, they expect a reasonable amount of time. Sometimes compromises can be made. However, there are certain dances, certain kinds of folk music, certain traditional customs which cannot be too limited or the very heart will be cut out, the very spirit will be lost. On the other hand, if individual parts of the program are too long, or the program as the whole lasts too long, it gets tiresome. How can we handle? Will this problem eventually end genuine folk festival activities? Can a compromise be made or not?

9. Do you think it is wise to have a dividing line between the "festival people" and "folklorists"? Should festival leaders not do everything possible to become authorities in folklore by research in books as well as studying the traditional heritages in their living forms from their neighbors in home communities?

10. What can be done to encourage the use of musical instruments by dance groups, and simply for the joy of playing? Unless something is done, the fiddler, banjo picker, the dulcimer, tamburitza, kantele, accordion, harmonica, guitar, and other players of typical musical instruments will soon be out of the picture due to the wide-



John Hancock at the Red Rocks Theatre in the Rockies on Denver's outskirts. The theatre was hewn out of solid rock. The setting is beautiful. The day panorama is of great expanse enabling one to see terrific distances. The night view, with stars above and Denver lights glittering distantly, below, is, indeed, a thing of enchantment and a setting which is not soon forgotten for those who view presentations on that stage. When out East of the Mississippi, many people "ho'ho'd" and raised their eyebrows whenever, upon request (singing up in hotels, or introductions) John told them of his name. It seems, that out there and in the land of the historic John Hancock, this appellation is a type of "joke". They in turn thought he was kidding and usually asked me "What is his REAL name?" John Hancock it is. (Foto Fin).

GREETINGS FROM THE LITH. NAT'L COMM. IN GERMANY

"Sveikiname Vasario 16 Gimnazijos rėmėjus ir visus mūsų bičiulius bei talkininkus su šv. Kalėdomis ir Naujaisiais 1955 Metais.

Vasario 16 Gimnazija, PLB Vokietijos Krašto Valdyba"

"In the name of the "February 16th High School" we extend greetings to all our friends, supporters and co-workers with wishes for a most holy Christmas and happy 1955 New Years.

Lithuanian National Committee for Germany".

spread use of records and the ever growing television audience which discourages active participation in "music making".

11. How can we best present National Folk Festivals so as not to lose the spontaneous and unconscious charm which folk dancers and singers usually enjoy in home communities? Would we not be destroying the simple charm if we consciously try to appeal to audience? To what extent can we take into consideration audience reaction and not harm the overall objectives of the Festival? Should we not strive for informal presentations?

12. One of the themes of the 7th International Folk Festival to be held in Sao Paulo, Brazil, next August, will be the "style and technique of traditional singers, dancers, and instrumentalists". Leaders in the other countries are experiencing most of the same problems which we are facing today, especially those that have to do with the survival of deeply rooted folk legacies and their style and technique.

13. This merely begins MY list of problems! What are yours? Won't you please write me or to VILTIS of your reactions?

SARAH GERTRUDE KNOTT, Director
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